THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S.B.P.B.K. SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) Yes, Sir. Intensive cropping with high inputs and high yielding varieties have resulted in decline in soil fertility, particularly in respect of micro and secondary nutrients elements due to their removal at a rate more than their replenishment.

(b) and (c) Generally, the fertility of soils improves with improvement in moisture availability in the soil. The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation is advocating soil and water conservation and soil test based balanced and integrated nutrient management through conjunctive use of both inorganic and organic sources of plant nutrients to restore soil fertility.

The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation is implementing various land based programmes, namely (i) Soil Conservation in the catchments of River Valley Projects (RVP) and Flood Prone Rivers (FPR), (ii) Watershed Development Project in Shifting Cultivation Areas, (iii) National Watershed Development Project in Rainfed Areas and (iv) Reclamation of Alkali Soils, to minimise land degradation which ultimately results in enhanced fertility in the agricultural land of the country. In addition to the above, the State Governments implement their own Plan Schemes for improving fertility of such areas in their States.

Losses due to flood in Gujarat

3258. SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there was flood in Gujarat during this monsoon particularly during 10th to 15th July, 2000;

(b) if so, the loss of crops, properties, animals and human beings; and

(c) the assistance being provided by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S.B.P.B.K. SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. As reported by the Government of Gujarat, the heavy rains and floods in the State during the current monsoon period has affected a population of 4.08 lakhs in 10 districts and caused damage to about 24,000 houses besides loss of 106 human lives and 405 cattle. Central share of Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) for 2000-01 amounting to Rs. 131.14 crore has already been released to the State for undertaking necessary relief measures in the wake of natural calamities including heavy rains and floods.

Failure of Food Development Fund

†3259. SHRI VIJAY SINGH YADAV: Will the Minister of AGRICUL-TURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Food Development Fund has not been successful;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the performance in this sector in respect of food products has been low in comparison to the other developed countries;

(d) if so, the facts in this regard together with the reasons therefor; and

(e) the steps taken by Government to increase the development rate of this sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF FOOD PROCESSING (SHRI TH. CHAOBA SINGH): (a) and (b) Action was initiated for setting up a Porcessed Food Development Fund but the response of Financial Institutions/Agencies has not been encouraging so far.

(c) to (e) The value addition to food products in our country is much lower compared to the developed countries.

Low demand-low volume of production-high per unit cost and again low demand are the main constraints faced by the Processed Food Sector. On account of high risk and low margin, not many entrepreneurs venture to enter although potential of this sector is reported to be immense.

The Government has taken number of policy initiatives to promote the growth of processed food sector in the country. Some of these are as under:—

(i) Under the Plan Schemes of the Department of Food Processing Industries, financial assistance in the form of soft loan and grant is provided to private industries, public sector undertakings, Non-Governmental Organisations, Co-operatives, Human Resource Development Organisations and Research & Development Institutions etc., for the development of processed food sector.

(ii) Food Processing Industries have been included in the list of priority sector for bank lending.

(iii) Most of the processed food items have been exempted from the purview of licensing under Industries (Development & Regulation) Act, 1951.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.